
Press Release

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS REGIONAL CONFERENCE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY *Moving Forward – Planning Together*

La Quinta – May 5th 2010 – The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 45th Annual Regional Conference & General Assembly kicked-off today, at the La Quinta Resort in Coachella Valley.

Today's program featured a partnership with USC and the LA Times "Fixing California Series," with panels on Housing, Transportation, Jobs and the Economy as well as a luncheon with senior policy advisors to the gubernatorial candidates. The day concluded with an awards banquet for the Compass Blueprint program (recognizing developers and municipalities with innovative approaches to land-use and transportation planning).

"We're very excited to bring together some of the finest minds from government, the private sector and academia to discuss the policy challenges our state will face in the years ahead," said **Dan Schnur, Director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC**. "Today's discussions are the first step in a year-long partnership between our organizations to prepare a Policy Blueprint that will be a guide for the next governor, our other elected representatives and for any Californian who wants to play a role in putting our state back on track."

Being one of the hottest topics of the day, the Job and Economy panel provided some needed silver-lining for California's future. One of the panelists, **Jack Keyser, Founding Economist, Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation** said, "A slow recovery is underway in Southern California, with one of the drivers being international trade. Home building will continue to lag, however. One unrecognized bright spot is infrastructure work, ranging from airport projects to rail transit."

The Housing panel featured representatives from the homebuilding field and the chamber of commerce along with a housing department official and real estate academic. **Randal Lewis, Vice President of Lewis Group of Companies**, a panelist and Inland Empire developer was encouraged by the tone of the dialogue throughout the program. "The future of the California housing market continues to be a key element in turning our economy around. Having a forum to bring both private and public sectors together to discuss how we move forward and work collectively, is imperative to

our State's future success and I applaud the efforts of SCAG and USC to put this conference together. ”

With campaign season in full-swing, an opportunity to listen to each of the gubernatorial candidate's positions on housing and the economy was timely. Each of the candidates sent their senior policy advisors to discuss and answer audience questions.

The Transportation panel began with a video address by **U.S. Senator and Environment Public Works Committee Chairwoman Barbara Boxer Boxer**, who mentioned SCAG's Compass Blueprint Program, noting, “The Compass Blueprint Program is a forward thinking framework that encourages well designed transportation systems and innovative land-use planning.” She also discussed the importance of continued funding for transportation projects in Southern California.

In reflecting on the day's activities, **SCAG President Jon Edney** remarked that, “SCAG has benefitted from the valuable input received from our business leaders over the last year and today on critical issues to our cities such as jobs, housing and transportation. Having their voices and experience at the table enriches SCAG's efforts to work together on finding ways to preserve and promote economic vitality for Southern California businesses and improve livability for our 19 million residents.”

Program highlights for tomorrow include, a panel on this year's Ballot Initiatives, the swearing-in of incoming SCAG President Larry McCallon (Councilman, City of Highland) as well as a presentation and discussion on SB 375 target setting and next steps for the region.

2010 SCAG Regional Conference & General Assembly - May 5-7, 2010

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 189 cities and more than 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.